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**HARPER'S FERRY INSURRECTION,**

*With a Review of Discourses on the Subject,*

By Rev. W. H. Furness, Hon. J. R. Giddings & Wendell Phillips, Esq.

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**A LECTURE BY JOSEPH BARKER, ESQ.**

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Some have felt alarm lest, in speaking on this subject, we should give offence; and we confess there is some excuse for such alarm. "If you justify Brown," says one, "you will offend one class; and if you condemn him, you will offend another." Very true. But if we neither justify nor condemn the unfortunate insurrectionist, what then? Suppose that instead of dwelling on matters merely personal, we discuss great principles—Suppose we confine our remarks to the subject of insurrection and civil war; or to the question, what is the best remedy for social or political evils? or what is the best course to take in seeking the improvement and happiness of our country and our kind? And suppose, in speaking on this subject, we show no bitterness or uncharitableness towards any party, or towards any class; but that, on the contrary, we make allowance for the mistakes of all, and acknowledge our need of charitable forbearance for our own—will this offend? Then let such as are likely to be offended at such a course, take up, not their beds, but their hats, and their heads, if they have any, and walk, for this is the course we intend to pursue.

The man who sees his country in danger, and seeks not to avert the danger, does not deserve to have a country. The man who hears principles inculcated which he believes are calculated to involve his country in the greatest calamities that can afflict a nation, and remains silent, is a traitor both to his country and to humanity.

We grant that we are liable to err, like our brethren; we would therefore state our views with modesty: but we *must* state them, for they may be true, and of importance to the community.

There is a song, if we remember rightly, in which a lady declares her love for a certain individual, but, fearful that her affection may not be reciprocated, she tries to disarm his dreaded displeasure, by telling him, he must not take any notice of what she says, for she is talking in her sleep. If my friends should be startled at any of my remarks, let them fancy that *I* am talking in my sleep. If they find such a stretch of the imagination too much for them, let them find out some other way of excusing me.

Some ten or twelve days ago I visited a spiritual medium, who told me, among other things, that I was myself a medium of the highest order,—both a speaking and a writing medium. She told me that quite a number of highly developed spirits attended me continually, and made use of me for the purpose of communicating their advanced sentiments to the world. Among the host of spirits attendant on me were Confucius, the great Chinese philosopher and moralist; Whitfield, the pulpit orator; Fletcher, the theological controversialist; Oliver Cromwell, the warrior and the statesman; Lord Harry Vane, once Governor of New England, but obliged to retire to Old England on account of his liberality of sentiment; Thomas Paine, the brave and eloquent philanthropist; Voltaire, the greatest of them all; together with my departed father and brother, two spirits as good, if not as great, as the noblest and the best. Now what more easy than for my hearers to suppose, that for once I am not a principal, but only an instrument, a medium,—that what they hear is not anything of my own, but the utterance of some one of the noble spirits by which I am attended, and that anything which may seem doubtful, mysterious, or objectionable, appears so simply because the spirit speaking through me is of a higher order, and requires a higher order of minds fully to understand and appreciate his oracles. When Jesus spake incredible things, he said it was not he that was responsible, but the Father that dwelt in him. When Paul wrote mysteries, he fathered them on Jesus or the Holy Ghost. Should I speak anything that seems a little too conservative, charge it on old Confucius. If I should say anything that seems too radical, charge it on Paine. If I wax a little too warm, charge it on Whitfield. If anything seem sarcastic, charge it on Voltaire. If I fail in argument, charge it on Fletcher. If I say anything that seems to be very rational and good, let my father and brother have the credit; and if I keep my temper, either

to-night, or when called to account for my lecture afterwards, charge it on me. And in any case, when you hear from me anything that tries you severely, think it is God that is exercising your patience, with a view to make you "perfect, and entire, lacking nothing."

Our object in calling attention to this subject is, the good of the community. We are influenced by no desire to gratify a vain curiosity, to furnish an hour's idle amusement, or to encourage any useless or dangerous excitement. And we have no political party to serve, nor any personal object to gain. The affair is, however, a matter of no small importance, and ought not to be passed over without serious consideration. It has, besides, called forth a great variety of comments, many of which appear to call for additional comments. Some of those comments seem wise and good, and worthy of remembrance; while others are false and dangerous, and call for refutation. The insurrection and the comments together have so many important bearings, suggest so many grave reflections, and seem to inculcate so many useful lessons, that we know not how we could more profitably employ our time on this occasion, than by taking them into our most serious consideration.

With regard to the narrative of the insurrection and the history of its author, we have nothing to add to what has appeared in the newspapers, with which you are, probably, as well acquainted as ourselves. Nor have we anything new to say of the *character* of Brown. It seems to be generally agreed that he was a well-disposed, good kind of man; industrious, sober, honest and brave. No one seems to question but that, in his career in Kansas, as well as in his last and fatal enterprise, he was influenced by disinterested and generous motives! It seems sufficiently plain that he did not, like our Cuban and Nicaraguan filibusters, seek wealth or power for himself, but freedom for the slave. Nor does it appear, so far as we can see, that he showed any hatred of the slave-holders, or that he cherished any feeling of vengeance in consequence of his sufferings and losses in Kansas. He seems to have had very much the spirit of the better class of soldiers, and to have been anxious to secure his object with as little violation of the laws of modern civilized warfare as possible. He had evidently no intention or disposition to give the slave-holders any more trouble, or to cause them or their families any more suffering than might seem necessary to the attainment of his philanthropic object. We imagine that

such as have no particular interest at stake, no passion or prejudice to affect their minds unduly, will, while they regret his fanaticism and lack of judgment, see much in his character and bearing to approve and admire: while his grievous bodily sufferings, his terrible family bereavements, and his present deplorable position—sources of anguish so tremendously excruciating to his mind—must dispose even those whom he has wronged to regard him with commiseration. If he has committed a grievous error, he has suffered, and is doomed still further to suffer, a grievous penalty. We may reasonably, therefore, deal gently with the erring one, and, while we discuss, with all freedom and fidelity, the character and bearings of his hapless enterprise, forbear from offering any insult or indignity to the fallen adventurer, or making any remarks that might give unnecessary pain to his suffering and sorrowing family. Brown played a desperate game. He staked his all, and the chances were all against him, and he lost. Let those who can contemplate his adventure and his fate without emotion, do so; we cannot. But our concern is not so much with men, as with principles. Our object is not so much to do justice to the dead, as to give instruction to the living.

We propose, in the first place, to make some brief remarks on the discourses of Rev. W. Furness, Hon. J. R. Giddings, and Wendell Phillips on Brown's adventure.

We will begin with the discourses of Mr. Furness.

He delivered two—the first from the text, “The kingdom of God cometh not with observation.” The second from the text, “Overcome evil with good.” The object of both was to show, that all great reforms in society are effected by moral agencies, by peaceful measures, by the force of truth, and not by violence and war. Both discourses were good, as Mr. Furness's discourses generally are. And with the doctrine of Mr. Furness, as a general principle, we have no quarrel. We believe with him that truth, truth uttered in love, is the greatest, the mightiest of all reforming agencies,—that we can only improve laws and institutions and governments, in proportion as we enlighten and elevate mankind.

But there were several things in those discourses which to us appeared objectionable.

1. Mr. Furness was not content with condemning the insurrection of Brown; he condemned *all* insurrections. He involved the insurrection of the English against Charles the First, the insurrection of the French under Louis the

Sixteenth, and the insurrection of the Americans under George the Third, in the same condemnation. This, in our judgment, was going to an extreme. We believe, with Paley, and Brougham, and Godwin, and Paine, and Jefferson, that there are cases in which insurrection is a duty.

2. He contended that no human wrong could ever be righted by recourse to violence. We believe that in the insurrections of England, America, and France *many* wrongs were righted. If he had said, that violence *alone* cannot rectify human wrongs, we should have concurred; but violence does not always *go* alone. The spread of truth, the discussion of questions of right and duty, go before, go along with violence, and follow after. This was the case in the great insurrections to which we have referred.

3. He inculcated the doctrine of passive non-resistance as taught by Jesus. "If any one smite thee on the right cheek, turn to him the other; and if any man take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also." This we regard as a species of fanaticism. It strikes at the root of all government. It would encourage crime. It would make the greatest villains the sole rulers. It would place all things in the hands of the unprincipled; leave us all at their disposal. That patience, forbearance, is a duty—that it is wise, in all cases, to try what gentleness will do, we grant. But if gentleness, entreaty, reason fail, then, if there be a chance of succeeding by revolvers, we would use them without stint.

4. To resist oppression or wrong by force, Mr. Furness called seeking to overcome evil *with* evil—doing evil that good may come. In this he erred. The use of force is *not* in itself evil. It is only evil when used for evil ends. Tyranny, oppression, robbery, murder, are *more* than the employment of force; they are the employment of force for evil purposes. But the use of force to overthrow tyranny, to prevent robbery, or murder, or crimes still worse, is not evil, but good.

Mr. Furness said as much as that, to resist evil with force is to become as bad as those blood-thirsty men whom we resist. But this is an error. The man who kills another to prevent him from violating the honor of his wife or daughter, is not bad at all, much less is he as bad as the monster whom he slays. He *would* be as bad if he could stand quietly by and see the greatest of all crimes perpetrated on his wife or child *without* resistance. In short, the men who rely on force alone for the correction or cure of

social evils go to one extreme; the men who condemn all use of force, in every case, go to the other. The men who resort to force before they have tried what reason or entreaty will do, and the men who will not resort to force when reason and entreaty fail, both err, and err equally.

Joshua R. Giddings not only contended for the right of insurrection under certain circumstances, but seemed to justify the insurrection of Brown, and to encourage people to make similar attempts in time to come. I might not fully understand him, but this was the impression left on my own mind. This I think as great and dangerous an error as those of Mr. Furness. Such men as Paley and Brougham and Paine limit the right of insurrection. They contend that to justify men in rebelling against a government, it is necessary

1. That there be some great social evil to be remedied.
2. That there be no reasonable prospect of remedying the evil by any gentler means. And
3. That there be every reasonable prospect of succeeding in remedying it by insurrection.

In thus limiting the right of insurrection, they are, in our view, perfectly right. No man, then, ought to counsel, or in any way encourage insurrection, when any of these conditions are wanting. Mr. Giddings seemed to me to be under some excitement, and to speak with too little caution.

Mr. Giddings seemed to justify insurrection on the part of the North against the South, on the ground that the South had acted unjustly towards the North in passing the Fugitive Slave Law, repealing the Missouri Compromise, and attempting to force slavery on Kansas. But we cannot justify insurrection on the principle of retaliation.

Wendell Phillips' address, if the newspaper report was correct, was the most objectionable of all. To me it seemed the effusion of a madman, or something worse. Many of his statements were as reckless and outrageous falsehoods as I ever met with. Take the following:—

1. "Brown was no insurrectionist, because Virginia is no *commonwealth*;" and Virginia is no commonwealth, because Wendell Phillips' ideas of equality are not the basis of the Constitution. According to this, there never was an insurrection in England, or France, or anywhere else, because neither in England, nor France, nor anywhere else was there ever a commonwealth, according to Wendell Phillips' definition.

2. Again he says, "John Brown has twice as much right to hang Gov. Wise, as Gov. Wise has to hang John Brown." And again,

3. "John Brown sails with letters of marque from God against every such State as Virginia." To us, such talk sounds like the raving of a madman.

4. Speaking of the trial of Brown, he represents the Judge as worse than Jeffries in the most drunken moment of his life, and says that there is not such a record on the blackest roll of the tyranny of the Stewarts as the trial of Brown. Nay, more; there is no such infamous proceeding recorded in *any* annals as the trial of Brown.

Now, I say, and say it most deliberately and advisedly, that Wendell Phillips is either dreadfully ignorant of history, or one of the most wicked and outrageous falsifiers that ever spoke.

There are several other statements, on other subjects, as foolish and false, but they are too extravagant to do much harm, unless Americans are more ignorant than we suppose them to be. The more guarded statements of such men as Mr. Giddings, and the more moderate of the Progressive friends, are more likely to mislead, and to these, therefore, we will, for the present, confine our attention.

Nearly every one to whom I have listened, except Mr. Furness and another gentleman, justified Brown, and spoke in such a manner as to encourage insurrection. This, in our view, is somewhat alarming. We cannot believe that those who speak thus have duly considered the subject, and we are inclined to believe that a few remarks may lead some of them to view the matter in a different light.

At a meeting which we attended on Sunday last, called to discuss the subject of Slavery and civil war, the gentleman who opened the debate contended that Brown was *justified* in what he did. But in what *sense* did he suppose him justified? The *speaker* could not justify *himself* in doing what Brown did; else why did he not go and do it? That Brown was justified by *himself* in what he did, before he found that his enterprise miscarried, no one will deny; but that he did not justify himself *after*, is plain, for we find him regretting that he did not do otherwise. The question should be—Was the course which Brown took the best which he possibly could take for the interests of his country and his kind? We think *not*. To judge from appearances, we should say, that Brown could hardly have acted more unwisely. So far as we can judge at present he



accomplished nothing, either for the slave or the slave's friends, while he involved himself and his colleagues in ruin, and caused the death of several innocent men. The alarm which he has caused, the terror which he has inspired in the Southern States, will probably lead to the severer treatment of many of the slaves, and to more grievous restrictions both on slaves and others. We have said that insurrection can never be justified, except

1. When there is some great social evil to be remedied.
2. When there is no reasonable prospect of being able to remedy the evil by any gentler means.
3. When there is every reasonable prospect of success in attempting to remedy the evil by insurrection.

Let us see whether these conditions meet in the case under consideration. The evil complained of in the present case is Slavery. Slavery, it is contended, is the greatest injustice against man, and the greatest sin against God, and ought to be put down at all hazards. On this subject I should find it difficult to state exactly and at full length my own views on this occasion. I cannot agree either with the Garrisonian abolitionists or with the ultra pro-slavery party. The *religious* arguments against Slavery are not worth a straw. They are childish and absurd. "We are all the children of one God," we are told. Suppose we are, what then? The lower animals are the children of the same God: yet we enslave them notwithstanding, and even the abolitionists themselves do not complain. "The same God made both black and white," we are told. Suppose he did; the same God made both me and the mosquito, yet I kill the mosquito without hesitation when it troubles me. "We are all brethren, made of one blood," it is said. Suppose we are; must we therefore be all equal in position, rank, or even talents? The prisoners in the various States may be our brethren, yet we keep them in the Penitentiary notwithstanding. But who told our friends that God made us all, and that we are all of one blood, all descended from one pair? The Bible. But what is the testimony of the Bible to us? Just as much as the prattle of a child. The truth is, however, that the Bible is pro-slavery. It is the *most* pro-slavery book we ever read. We defy the world to produce one more pro-slavery. The slave codes of the Southern States are not more pro-slavery. We do not remember a single anti-slavery passage in either old or new Testament. We remember hundreds that are *pro-slavery*. The whole ten-

dency of the book is pro-slavery; and its influence has favored slavery of every kind. And the slave-holders and the pro-slavery churches and clergy know this. And if the Southerners believe the Bible and Christianity to be of God, they must, in their own minds, be justified in upholding Slavery. And for Christians and Clergymen of the North to censure them for so doing, is proof either of the grossest ignorance or of consummate hypocrisy. If Slavery is to be proved wrong, it must be proved wrong not on Bible grounds, but on principles of expediency and humanity.

We have said that Slavery is scriptural. We may add, that to us it seems evident that Slavery is natural and inevitable during certain stages of human development. It does not, however, follow that Slavery ought to be a permanent institution. On the contrary, the very fact that it is adapted to an earlier and less developed state of civilization, is a proof that it cannot be adapted to a later and more perfect state. And it is a fact, that it has always passed away when nations have reached a certain point of intellectual and moral culture; and the same fate, no doubt, awaits it here. We have no belief either in the unity or the equality of the races. Some will always rule, and others will always obey. At the same time, we are far from believing that Chattel Slavery will always be the lot of inferior races, or that it is desirable that it should be. It is our conviction that the feeble or less resolute races can be both more happy themselves, and more useful to the stronger races, in a condition of modified freedom. Slavery has always been a troublesome and a dangerous institution, as may be seen in universal history. When a nation is divided, as this is, into different States, some cherishing the institution, and others seeking its abolition, it becomes much more troublesome and dangerous. Here, it injures and endangers every national interest. It stops Legislation for months at a time. It makes Congress the scene of dishonorable strife, and vulgar abuse, and murderous assaults. It causes bloodshed among the people both North and South. Here a slave-hunter is shot down; there a slave. In one place blood is shed to prevent the capture of a fugitive, and in another insurrection is organized to protect fugitives. We are not about to abuse or recklessly to censure slave-holders. We disclaim all connection and all sympathy with those who denounce slave-holding in every case as the sum of all villainies, and all slave-holders as the basest of men and the greatest of

criminals. There are as good men, we believe, in the South as in the North, among the slave-holders as among the abolitionists. There are slave-holders from whom we should expect more justice and generosity than we should expect from Wm. Lloyd Garrison or Wendell Phillips. We have seen a meanness in some of those disunion abolitionists, of which thousands of slave-holders, and even some clergymen, would be incapable. The mean bad men are confined to no sect, to no party, to no class; nor are the great and good. We do not believe, either that reformers are all that is good, or that conservatives are nothing but evil.

Nor do we consider that all the responsibility for the existence of Slavery in this country rests on the men of the South. If the institution be a good one, the men of the North should share the credit of it, for they planted and watered it, and made it grow. If it be a bad one, the men of the North should share the blame. But we deny that the whole responsibility for its existence is due to the men of the present generation, either North or South. A portion of it, a great portion, rests on the generations of the past. They created it, and they created the circumstances which now uphold it, and which render the task of dealing with it so difficult. But we have nothing to do with the responsibility or criminality of any party. Our concern at present is with the institution, and our duty in regard to it. We repeat, then, that Slavery is a troublesome and a dangerous institution. The Harper's Ferry insurrection is proof of this. No such enterprise could have been conceived against a free State. No handful of fanatics would ever dream of overturning the government of Pennsylvania. There is nothing in the character of our institutions to encourage such mad attempts. But in Slavery, in a country divided as ours is, there is. The fact that so many fly from Slavery, and that such severe measures are necessary to prevent others from escaping, is encouragement enough to fanatical philanthropists to expect assistance and co-operation from the slaves whenever the flag of insurrection is unfurled. The Harper's Ferry insurrection is not the first that has alarmed the South. It will probably not be the last. We wish it might. But the history of Kansas shows that many abolitionists have got to the fighting point. Having tried their hand in Kansas with some success, they have got a liking for the exciting work. Then their false ideas of

duty make them look on a move against Slavery as highly meritorious. The sudden suppression of this first attempt was highly fortunate, and calculated to make the friends of such movements pause; but it would be foolish and dangerous to conclude that it will prevent them from trying again. One failure did not satisfy Gen. Walker, or our Cuban adventurers; nor will it satisfy our abolition adventurers. So surely as slavery continues, so surely will insurrection reappear. The pious souls will say to themselves, "God has chosen to try us with disappointment in the present case, but it is only to make us more sensible of our dependence on him. Our fathers did not conquer the British in a day. Washington had defeats as well as victories. Wickliffe failed, and so did Huss—but Luther succeeded. Brown and his followers have fallen, but the blood of the martyrs will be the seed of the church." The Southerners themselves feel this, hence their excitement and alarm. They know they are not safe. They never can be safe so long as abolitionism spreads in the North. And it would be madness now to expect it to do any thing else but spread. Men might as well talk of suppressing daylight and the sun, as of putting down abolitionism. Right or wrong, it has become a mighty power, and it is daily becoming mightier. And it is destined to triumph.

Those who read history know, that anti-slavery movements never go back. In Germany, in France, in England, they went ever forward. It will be so here. There is something in human nature that renders advancing civilization the deadly foe, the inevitable destroyer, of every form of Slavery. It is no use complaining; the law is universal and inexorable. All have to succumb. It destroys alike the spiritual power of the priest, the political power of the despot, the civil power of the slaveholder, and the domestic power of the husband and the father. All wait alike the inevitable hour. The sovereigns of Europe may make their holy alliances, the clergy may form their evangelical alliances, and slave-holders in the South may form their vigilance committees, and all may appear to succeed for a time, but they will pass away. France, crushed and crippled for a time, becomes, in spite of the holy alliance, the dictator of Europe, and the arbiter of the globe. The anti-slavery party may be embarrassed, confounded, routed, for a time, but it will rally again, and appear in greater force than ever. What Seward says is true, the conflict is "*irrepressible*;" and freedom must prevail.

It is destiny—manifest destiny. No vigilance, no precaution, no military force, no judicial executions, no political manœuvres, no display of oratorical power in Congress, no challenges to mortal combat, no efforts of the clergy, no use of the Press, no prayers, no help from God or Devil, can secure Slavery against the all-pervading, ever-acting spirit of the age.

So far, then, we must all acknowledge Slavery to be an evil. It is not only disagreeable to many of the slaves, but it is full of difficulty and peril to the country.

But the question comes, is there any necessity to employ violence for its destruction? We have said, that men ought never to risk the evils of insurrection, till they have tried all gentler remedies, and found them ineffectual. But will any one pretend that all the means short of insurrection have been employed in the present case, and employed in vain, and that there is no ground to believe that they can ever be successful? The man would convict himself of the grossest ignorance, or of criminal recklessness, that should make such a statement. The gentler means employed for the removal of the evil have thus far had all the success that could reasonably be expected, both in America and other countries. They succeeded in abolishing Negro-slavery in the colonies of France and in the colonies of England. They succeeded still earlier in abolishing White Slavery in all the nations of Europe. They are abolishing it now in Russia. Peaceful measures have abolished Slavery in the greater part of these United States. At one time Slavery existed in every settlement in the country. In New England they had both black slaves and white slaves. *All* the colonies had *black* slaves. New York, New Jersey and Pennsylvania held slaves. All denominations held them. Even the Quakers held slaves. William Penn held slaves. Yet in all these States Slavery has been abolished, and abolished without civil war. Again, peaceful measures have prevented Slavery from ever entering other parts of the country. And they have abated the evil in others, as the history of Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, Kentucky and Missouri can testify. These peaceful measures have greatly changed the views and feelings of the Northern people on the subject of Slavery, and considerably modified their action both within their own borders, and in the Congress of the United States. Some thirty years ago anti-slavery men were as rare as statesmen and patriots are now; at present they are as plentiful as politicians.

Twenty-five years ago Lloyd Garrison was dragged through the streets of Boston with a rope round his neck, and had a narrow escape with his life. Now he can travel through the whole North in safety, and notwithstanding the mediocrity of his talents, if he had been as wise as he has been persevering, he would probably have been held in general estimation. Not many years ago the Congress forbade the presentation of petitions and prohibited discussion on the subject of Slavery—and some of the first men of the North were censured or expelled for violating these rules. Now, petitions can be presented in any quantity; and discussions on slavery have become so common in Congress of late, that our national legislature has hardly been able to attend to any other business. Not twenty-five years ago, Pennsylvania Hall was destroyed because it was used by an Anti-Slavery Society; now Frederick Douglass can lecture in the National Hall, and J. R. Giddings utter ultra sentiments in another Hall, and never be interrupted, except by the applause of their hearers. Thirty years ago and less, Brown and his party would have been hung or burnt without a trial; now they are tried with a decorum, which, under the circumstances, is really commendable—Wendell Phillips to the contrary notwithstanding. And all these happy changes have been effected by the peaceful operations of the press, the platform and the ballot-box. And these peaceful means have not been employed to one-half, nor even to one-tenth the extent to which they might have been employed. Where anti-slavery people have published one book, or one newspaper, they might have published ten. Where they publish one at present, they might publish a hundred. They might do much more by voting than they are doing. If they were willing to sacrifice one-tenth as much for the anti-slavery cause as they wish to compel the slave-holders to sacrifice, they might fill the country with their publications and lecturers, and by these peaceful means carry emancipation before the measure would be really advisable.

The anti-slavery party might have done much more for their cause if they had acted with common prudence. But their course has, in some respects, been as foolish and as mischievous as that of poor old Brown. The Garrisonian abolitionists have refused to vote, and denounced those who have thought it their duty to vote, as traitors and scoundrels. They have given the worst possible interpretation to the Constitution, and pronounced it a covenant with

death and an agreement with hell. They have abused the best, the wisest, the ablest, the bravest and the most useful anti-slavery men with a violence that can never be surpassed. They have driven all the most rational and liberal-minded from their platforms. The lecturers they have employed have, generally, been of the most fanatical and rabid description. They could not even refrain from villifying the very parties who supplied them with funds. As Hurnard says, the vocabulary of the Garrisonian party is the richest in abuse of anything of the kind since the Puritanic times of the English commonwealth. Many of the notions they have espoused and advocated are as absurd and ridiculous as their abuse of those who differ from them is extravagant and fierce. All war, all force used in self-defence, or even in defence of your wife and daughter, and all recourse to courts of law, and even all human government, are, in their view, wicked and intolerable. Then they clamor for immediate and unconditional emancipation, when they know that no such thing is either desirable or possible. Not content with saying that they would sooner dissolve the Union than allow Slavery to be longer continued, they call for a dissolution of the Union as if it were a thing desirable in itself. In short, the disunion abolitionists have, for many years past, done all that men could do to dishonor and ruin the cause of freedom and humanity; and yet, in spite of their fanaticism, the cause has advanced. The Republicans have erred almost as grievously. They have joined with the Know-nothings, and in Massachusetts, while pretending to seek the freedom of the negroes, have been disfranchising, outlawing her white fellow-citizens on account of the place of their birth; thus disgusting every honest friend of freedom, both at home and abroad. Yet still the cause advances. The rational and sober friends of freedom are every year becoming more numerous, and their opponents fewer and feebler. And there is every prospect that this cheering process will continue till the work of emancipation is peacefully consummated. There is, therefore, no excuse whatever for resort to violence.

Again, while there was no necessity to resort to violence, Brown and his friends had not the slightest reason to expect that such a course would prove successful. None but the most ignorant could have expected him to succeed. Their plan, which was explained to me after the outbreak by one of the party, was to take up a position in the mountains of

Virginia first, and thence make war on the slave-holders, sending off the slaves to places of safety, or adding them to their ranks, and using them in the war. But how were they to live in the mountains through the cold of winter? Where were they to obtain provisions? How were they to protect themselves against the forces of the States and the army of the Federal Government? They must have necessarily come in collision with those forces during the winter, and what could twenty-one, or even twenty-one hundred, have done against the combined forces of the nation?

But suppose they had, for a time, eluded or repelled the troops sent against them, and succeeded in spreading the flame of insurrection through the South, would they have been able to emancipate the slaves? We think not. They might have caused the slaughter of many of them, and the starvation of many more, and involved the rest in greater misery; but we doubt whether they would have freed any considerable number. We question whether they could have secured the freedom and happiness of a single family. If the troops sent against them had been beaten and routed for a time, they would have rallied, and the slave-holders would have joined them, and the insurrectionists must inevitably have been overpowered. If the slaves had all risen and joined the insurrectionists, a general slaughter of the white population must have followed, accompanied with the most revolting crimes and horrors. The authors of the insurrection would have lost control of the movement, and perished probably amid the general ruin. It is easy to kindle a mighty fire, but not so easy to control or extinguish it. A child might set a prairie or a pine forest on fire, but all the men on earth could not control the conflagration. Suppose the slave-holders had been beaten and slaughtered, and the slaves set free, would the condition of the negroes have been improved? They could not have carried on the business of the plantations. They could not have moved in mass to Canada, or been supported if they had got there. They could not have lived long in idleness. Brown and his men could not have maintained them. They must have perished wholesale of famine. Famine would have caused pestilence. The pestilence must have swept over the country. The whole nation would have been involved in the combined horrors of civil and of servile war. To these might have been added the horrors of foreign war. For if any foreign powers bore the country a grudge, they would naturally seize the opportunity, while



the country was distracted, weakened, and impoverished by suicidal strife, to gratify their malice. Imagine a country like this, with such varieties of citizens, and such conflicting sects and parties, ravaged at once by a three-fold war: the fabled hell of orthodoxy alone could exceed its horrors.

If this country is to be permanently freed from the institution of Slavery, the mass of the people must first be brought to approve of the measure. If Slavery were abolished by insurrection, while the majority of the people were opposed to its abolition, it would be likely to be restored when the insurrection was over. We know not what could hinder its restoration, under our present form of government, if a large majority of the people were favorable to its restoration. The success, therefore, of an insurrection against slavery could only be temporary, unless it were favored by a decisive majority of the whole people. But if a decisive majority were favorable to the abolition of Slavery, no insurrection would be necessary. It could in that case be abolished by a peaceful vote. That state of the public mind, therefore, that would render an insurrection necessary, would render it unsuccessful. That state of the public mind that would render an insurrection successful, would render it unnecessary.

The truth is, resort to violence in a country that has a free press, free speech, and free votes, can never be justified. If the evil complained of be a great, a palpable evil, the platform and the press can the more easily rouse the people to action for its peaceful removal. If it be a trifling evil, the reform may be less speedy, but the trouble can be more easily endured. If the people are too stupid or too depraved to be roused against a great and grievous wrong, they will be all the more likely to unite against forcible attempts to remedy it, and to make a speedy end of the insurrectionists. If the people are not dreadfully depraved, truth in time will influence them.

As I have said before, I am no ultra non-resistant. The doctrine that would require me, under all circumstances, when struck on the one cheek to turn the other, when robbed of my wife to give up my daughter, I hate, I loathe, I scorn. Let a wretch lay polluted or violent hands on wife or child of mine, I would, if I had the power, blow him to atoms. Talk of forgiveness or patience in such a case. The man that could forgive the violation of his wife or daughter, would deserve no forgiveness himself. No, I

believe it lawful to fight in certain circumstances; but why shed the blood of my neighbors, or pour out my own, without necessity, or without a prospect of success? In countries where the people generally are favorable to reform, while a handful of courtiers, priests, or aristocrats alone, with the forces of the government at their command are opposed, a resort to force may be necessary, and may be expected to succeed; but in a country like this, where the majority rule, insurrection can never be justifiable.

One gentleman says, "Civil war is better than slavery." We do not think so. Imagine this whole country involved in civil war—citizens warring with citizens—slaves and free colored people, fugitive slaves and slaves not fugitives, crowds of blacks and whites from Canada, raging for revenge; hordes of furious Indians wasting the western and southern frontiers; Mormons, with their Danites and merciless troops, obstructing travel, or taking Iowa, Minnesota, Nebraska and Kansas; Mexican bandits overrunning the southwestern States and Territories, and foreign countries aiding and augmenting the disorder, and tell me whether such a state of things would be better than the present. Imagine this state of things going on for years—for seven years, as in the Revolution; or for twenty years, as in the civil wars of England in the days of Cromwell; or for twenty-five, as in the days of the French Revolution. Imagine all the horrors and miseries of civil war multiplied and aggravated in this country by the unparalleled mixture of races—Germans and French, Austrians and Hungarians, English and Irish, Young America and Old Europe, Know-nothings and foreign Catholics—the fiercer spirits of every party and nationality taking advantage of times of disorder to gratify their malice, to avenge their wrongs, to serve their selfish interests, and to vent their pious or their patriotic spleen, while work and trade and commerce languish, and famine and fever and plague come to help the human furies to lay waste the land, and I would like to know whether such a state of things would not be worse than the present? Men must be mad to talk as they do.

Besides, is any one so insane as to suppose that civil war would *abolish* Slavery, or better the condition of the slave? The worst thing that could happen even to the slaves, would be a civil war and a slave insurrection. Even when insurrections are necessary and successful, their results are often disastrous. It seemed necessary in 1789, when the National Assembly of France was threatened by the

Court, that the people of Paris should rise and overawe the government. They rose, and accomplished their object. They rose on other occasions, under the pressure of similar necessity, and met with similar success. But this was not the end of the matter. The people got a habit of rising, and they rose when no insurrection was necessary. After helping the Assembly, they subdued it. After aiding liberty, they crushed it. They rendered government impossible; caused general anarchy; and so prepared the way for a military despotism.

We see similar results, on a smaller scale, in this country. The magistracy and the courts do not do their duty in prosecuting and punishing crime in a certain place, so the people take the matter into their own hands. They form a vigilance committee, try and punish offenders without regard to the courts, and the consequence is a reign of terror. Innocent people are put to death; honest men are plundered; good citizens are driven from their homes; and if the evil continue, the neighborhood is ruined. It is a more dangerous thing to supersede law and government than people under excitement are apt to suppose.

"But the slave-holders might fight even if Slavery were abolished by a vote of a majority." They might; but they would be far less likely to fight when they found themselves in a small minority, than if they found themselves in a great majority. And they would be far less likely to conquer if they did fight. But our opinion is, that the slave-holders would be willing to accept the abolition of Slavery when they found themselves left in a small minority, if the measure were presented in a proper shape. Suppose the majority should propose to buy the slaves, at two-thirds, or three-fourths their market value. Suppose arrangements were at the same time suggested, which would render abolition safe. Would a minority reject such a proposition as that? Would they sooner risk a civil war? Impossible. But if there would be danger of a small minority resisting the government, how foolish it would be to attempt, either by vote or violence, to carry emancipation *before* its opponents are reduced to a small minority. But must the *North* share the expense of abolition? Why not? The North introduced slavery. The North has encouraged it. The North has shared the advantages of the system. The North is older and richer than the South, and can better afford to make a sacrifice for peace and humanity. The North would cause its professions to be suspected, if it should seek to gratify its philanthropy at

the expense of the South. What is philanthropy worth, if it shrink from a reasonable sacrifice? The *Christians* of the North could offer no reasonable objection to pay *their* share, for they do not care for money: they are above all that. They neither love the world, nor the things that are in the world. And the *infidels* would not object, for *they* would do anything in reason, to secure the peace and prosperity of the country. Besides, the measure would take nothing out of the country. The property would still be all in the family. And if free labor is more productive than slave labor, as the Northern Abolitionists say, the wealth of the country would be increased. And the sacrifice would not be half so great, even if the amount were lost, as the sacrifice which would accompany insurrection, and a civil and servile war. And it would only be a sacrifice of money; whereas the loss resulting from civil war would be a loss of life as well as treasure. Besides, in civil war, the property sacrificed would be really lost—destroyed. Again, the English paid the slaveholders of their colonies twenty millions sterling for their slaves when they abolished Slavery in the West Indies; and shall the Northern States of America be less just or less generous than England?

Some seem to deplore the late events on account of the influence they may have on the prospects of the Republican party at the approaching Presidential election. We do not. We have no desire to see the Republicans in power just yet. They have more power already than they know how to use. The Republicans are dominant in Massachusetts; but what have they done for religious freedom? Nothing. What have they done for intelligent, brave and patriotic citizens of foreign birth? Commenced a course of legislation with a view to their disfranchisement. What did they do in Ohio? Fill every office with Know-nothings, and drive respectable heretics and foreigners out of the State. The Republicans, like other parties, are too eager for power and public pay, and, for ourselves, we are no way impatient to exalt them too soon. A little disappointment will do them no harm. If adversity has a tendency to make men more virtuous, they should be thankful for it, for they have need of its influence. If they should remain in purgatory four years longer, it will do them no harm. They will be none too pure for translation to the heaven of office at the end of that term.

If they were not more anxious for office and pay than for the good of the public and the slave, they would be

glad rather than sorry to be kept in the school of adversity a little longer. We grant the present administration is not over good, but why be impatient for a change till we can have a decided improvement? The Republicans can do as much good in checking the follies, in rousing the conscience, and stimulating the useful activity of a Democratic administration, as in handling the funds and directing the affairs of the nation themselves. We fear, in fact, that the Republicans would be more useless, more mischievous in office, in the present state of the nation, than the Democrats. We want no sudden fall of the slave power, even by the vote of the people. We had rather see it fall softly, gently. What we wish is a gradual transformation, an assimilation, and then a happy co-operation of all parties, North and South. Such a consummation is not only devoutly to be wished, but absolutely necessary, if we are to preserve the peace of the Union. And why may we not hope for such an event? The Southerners are improving as well as the Northerners. And they will continue to improve. The incorrigible will die off, and better take their places. The sun cannot rise on the North without illuminating the South; and truth cannot modify the opinions of the North without changing those of the South. The leaven will leaven not one half but the whole lump. The middle class in England did not prostrate the aristocracy, but imbued them with their principles—made them reformers. If the South were too much humbled, too much mortified at present, they might prove troublesome, dangerous. A rat once got into a tub half full of water, and was gradually losing its strength, and drowning. A youthful spectator was wishful to finish the rat at once, and proceeded to the side of the tub for that purpose. The rat no sooner saw him with his uplifted cane, than all its latent energies came into play, and it jumped right out of the tub, and reached its hole in safety. The youth had better have let the rat drown quietly by degrees. Many a huntsman has suffered by seizing his prey before it had had time to die. We are in no danger of being too zealous in the cause of virtue, but we are in danger of being too impatient to get hold of its rewards. Slavery is dying. *All* evil is dying. The law of progress is the law of the universe. But nature will not be hurried. The egg will have its time to hatch. The tree will have its time to grow. The individual and the community must have their time to learn the lessons of truth, and acquire the habits of virtue. But time on their part, and a wise and persevering use of means on

our part, are all that are required. Let us but do our duty, and we may wait the results in peace.

But the slaves are suffering, you say. We grant it. And thousands of merchants, and mechanics, and farmers are suffering; and thousands of seamstresses and hapless women are suffering; and thousands of promising young men and innocent maidens are suffering—all for want of better social arrangements. But what then? Shall we make a general insurrection? Would that make matters any better? It would make them worse. There are millions suffering from oppression in Europe; but shall we organize a Quixotic expedition to revolutionize Europe? The natives of India are suffering, and the natives of China, and the people of Northern and Southern Africa, and so are all other people in every part of the globe; and the birds of the air, and the beasts of the field, and the fish in the sea, are suffering; the whole creation groans and travails in pain together; but what can we do? Shall we make things worse because we cannot make them better in a day? The living tribes of earth and air and sea have been suffering and dying for countless ages; yet for countless ages animated nature has been slowly advancing, improving; let the process of improvement go on. Aid it, if you can; but do not, in your mad impatience, meddle so as to mar. All that we can do for suffering humanity—at least the best we can do—is, steadily and patiently to increase the amount of knowledge and virtue in the community, and gently aid their influence in transforming the laws, the institutions, and the characters of nations. Let the Republicans “learn to labor and to wait.”

We are not so anxious or so impatient for the particular measure of emancipation even, as we are for the general enlightenment and improvement of the people. Emancipation itself might come too soon. We would like society generally to be in a better state before we have emancipation. Society is not prepared, as yet, to do justice to the negroes. It does not do justice to white men. It does still less justice to white women. People generally are too eager for gold, too fond of show, too vain, too proud, too selfish, too unprincipled to treat a feeble race with humanity. The red men are free, but what do we do with them? Rob them, insult them, steal their wives and daughters, kill them. We have free negroes on every hand; but how do we treat them? The law ranks them with cattle, and declares that they have no rights which a white man is bound to respect. I heard a gentleman of

this city, a member of this congregation, but now dead, say that he had money enough to save himself from punishment if he were to murder a white man, and enough to get him clear if he were to murder twenty colored men. And I fear he was right. How much better off would the slaves of Baltimore be in that city, if they were free to-morrow? How much better off is an Irishman, a German, or an Englishman in that city, for the legal right of voting? What confidence can we have in a community that makes such men and women as those before me out-laws on account of their opinions? The most enlightened and virtuous members of the community are liable to be robbed and murdered with impunity, simply because they are not orthodox in their belief. The man who questions religious dogmas is deemed unqualified to bear witness against a thief or murderer. Even the Jew is robbed for obeying the ten commandments of his law. Every soul of us is robbed to support the churches, and to pay the salaries of useless, meddlesome, mischievous chaplains in the army and navy. We are all of us something like slaves one day in seven, if not the other six as well. And society is as selfish as it is intolerant. All are trying to overreach each other. Almost everything is adulterated. We pay for food and drink, and get poison. Trade is a system of swindling. We swindle foreigners, and we swindle one another. Friends swindle friends, and brother swindles brother. All classes are at strife; all trying to outwit and plunder one another. Government is a swindle, and politics a speculation. The strong crush the weak, the crafty ruin the simple. Our interests, which ought to be harmonious, are all discordant. Instead of the community being one great joint stock company, one vast co-operative association—securing labor, and subsistence, and protection to every member—it is a multitude of eager scramblers, a confused race for gold and place, on the principle of “every one for himself, and the devil take the hindmost.”

We do not say that nothing is to be done for the slave till society is perfect; but we ought not to expect too much from emancipation till society is much improved. We ought not to be in a hurry to carry the measure. It would be madness to risk a civil and a servile war for the liberation of the slaves. We shall have emancipation by peaceful means before we are prepared to render it as great a blessing as humanity would desire. Plead for the slave as much as you please, but do not forget your nearer neighbors. We want more light, we want more freedom, we

want more virtue, we want better social arrangements at the North as well as at the South. In improving the North we shall be aiding the South in the surest and most efficient way. In exploding superstition, in weakening the priest-hoods, in enlightening the pious, and reforming ourselves, we shall not only hasten the peaceful abolition of Slavery, but render the measure a blessing both to the slave and the community. Let science and virtue conquer the press, the pulpit, the government, and the mob; let it crush corruption and villany, and raise virtue and talent to the ascendancy, and every other beneficent reform will follow as a matter of course. To resort to insurrectionary measures, in the present state of things, would be the wildest insanity.

A word or two, separately, to the different parties which make up the aggregate population of the country, and we have done :

I would say to the South, "Forget the sayings and doings of the North; at least suppress any violent emotions they may have raised in your minds, and ponder calmly and seriously this question of Slavery for yourselves. A little thought may save a world of sorrow. Ask yourselves what course will be likely to answer best for yourselves, for your sons and your daughters, and for your offspring through coming generations. Look at the matter in the light of history. Take into consideration the progressive spirit of the age. Remember, among other things, that the church, the clergy and the Bible cannot protect you for ever; they are going the way so many other things have gone, and they will not return. Ask yourselves in what form your property will do most good and least harm, in the hands of your offspring, and put it into that shape as soon as possible. Let neither revenge, nor pride, nor hatred, nor contempt, nor any other passion influence you, but let an honest love of truth, a noble regard for the right, a manly self respect, a generous concern for the happiness and glory of your country, and for the comfort and welfare of your families, control your judgments and regulate your course. If the result should be a conviction that the present form of your institutions is the wisest and best, maintain it at all hazards and against all odds. But if you should be led to suspect that the spirit of the times, the tendencies of modern civilization, the history of the past, and the probabilities of the future, require a change, prepare to make it as soon as practicable, and in the quickest and safest way you can.

To the North I would say, Look at home. You are great physicians; heal yourselves. You are great reformers: reform yourselves. You have an immense amount of charity; let it begin its work of blessing at home. Reform the morals of your stores and counting houses, of your banks and railroads, of your domestic and foreign trade. Free your cities, your towns and your villages from that most discreditable and ruinous vice of prostitution. Make such arrangements as will enable your daughters to live without selling their charms to infernal scoundrelism, or surrendering their delicate forms to infamy, disease and death. Furnish your women with suitable employment, and give them wages by which they can live. Free yourselves, your wives and your children from the control of an ignorant and intolerant priesthood. Abolish their blue, puritanical Sunday laws. Put an end to their robbery of the public treasury. Banish their mischievous meddling from your schools. Give to outlawed heretics and sceptics their civil rights. Emancipate yourselves. Win for yourselves the right to spend your rest days in the way that suits you best. Open your reading-rooms on a Sunday; open your libraries, your lecture-rooms, your concerts, your academies of art, your academies of natural sciences, your



academies of music, your museums, your public parks, your city and country railroads, your botanical and zoological gardens, and afford yourselves and your children an opportunity of spending their rest day away from the filth and vice of your stews and groggeries, and the offensive odors of brimstone sanctity. Reform your literature. Teach your authors and your editors to speak the truth, and act like men. Reform your politics. Take the government of your cities and States out of the hands of the mob, and place it in the hands of men of sense and virtue. When you undertake to lecture the South, do it modestly. Do not go on the supposition that you are all right and your neighbors all wrong, but that there may be errors and imperfections on both sides. We do not say, "Let him that is without sin cast the first stone," or let him only that is perfect presume to counsel his neighbors; for then the occupation of counsellor must wholly cease. But we do say, Show as much concern for the correction of your own faults as for the correction of those of your neighbors. And when you address your neighbors, appeal to their judgments, not to their fears; and give proof that you are influenced by humanity, and not by a love of self or power. Do all you can for the South, in a peaceful way, but give no countenance to schemes of violence and blood. Instruct them—reform them, if you can, but do not seek to wrong or ruin them.

To the disunion abolitionists I would say, cease your raving, and begin to reason. We admire your zeal, but lament your lack of prudence. We honor philanthropy, but not insanity. We respect the reformer, but not the fanatic. We value freedom, but not anarchy. We abhor tyranny, but not government. You are wonderful men, no doubt, more wonderful than wise. You have seen many wonderful things, but there is one you have not seen, yourselves. You study Whittier, and read Mackay, and ye do well; but if you would add a lesson occasionally from Burns, you would do still better. When next you meet, omit your customary reading of the Scriptures, and substitute the following:—

"O wad some power the giftie gie us,  
To see oursel's as ithers see us,  
It wad frae mony a blunder free us  
And silly notion."

To the Republicans we would say, Do not be too eager in your pursuit of power. Be more anxious to use well what you have, than to get more. You will be none the less qualified for your exalted stations, by exerting your talents and practising your virtues a little longer in humbler stations. We have no desire that you should spare the faults of the Democrats, or your own either. Correct them all. By remaining out of office a little longer, you may be able at length to get in without the aid of the Know-nothings, and have a chance of helping the negro, without being obliged to sacrifice the Catholic or the foreigner. Bide your time, and fret not your gizzards. Be content with being good to-day, and wait for greatness till to-morrow.

To the Democrats we would say, as the rifle said to the coon, "You will have to come down." You have had your day, and you must now make way. New times must have new men. You can only save yourselves by going through the mill, and allowing yourselves to be ground down, and made over again. "Verily, verily I say unto you, Ye must be born again." Except ye be remodeled by the new ideas and spirit of the age, ye cannot often enter the White House again. You must accept all that is true and good in the principles and practices of all other parties, and reject their follies and fanaticisms only, or you will, without doubt, perish everlastingly. If you would enjoy the heaven of power much longer, you must spend your vacations in purgatory. In a word, old parties are breaking up, and if we would avoid anarchy and despotism, the wisest and best men of all parties must form a new one, and, wresting the sceptre from weakness and wickedness, rule the nation in the spirit of progress and humanity, with discretion and with vigor.

To the Know-nothings I would say, Get thee behind me, Satan! Amen.